United Nations A/54/947

General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 July 2000

Original: English

Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 31
Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity

Letter dated 21 July 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the Gambia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to request that you arrange for the distribution as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 31, of the declaration on the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity at its thirty-sixth ordinary session, held at Lomé from 10 to 12 July 2000 (see annex).

(*Signed*) Baboucarr-Blaise Ismaila **Jagne**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of the Gambia
Chairman of the African group for the month of July

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Annex to the letter dated 21 July 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the Gambia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Declaration on the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

12 July 2000

1. **We**, the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, meeting at the thirty-sixth ordinary session of our Assembly and the sixth ordinary session of the African Economic Community in Lomé, Togo, from 10 to 12 July 2000, **have** undertaken a critical review of the socio-economic situation of the 33 least developed countries in Africa.

2. **WE NOTE** with concern that the socio-economic situation in these countries has continued to deteriorate, and that this situation has been exacerbated by external debt, inadequate infrastructure facilities, as well as by conflicts in some regions and natural disasters like cyclones, floods and drought in others, leading to a rising level of poverty. Despite the drastic structural adjustment and policy reforms carried out by our countries, the number of countries in our continent classified in the category of least developed countries has not decreased.

3. The international community, including the institutions within the United Nations system, has demonstrated its support to the least developed countries through special initiatives targeted at this category of countries. In this regard, **WE WELCOME** the opportunity provided by the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries as a forum for the international community to go beyond general declarations of intent and commitment, and embark on concrete implementable actions directed at ameliorating the socio-economic situation in the least developed countries, with a view to attaining the internationally agreed target of reducing the level of poverty by half by the year 2015.

4. **WE REAFFIRM**, at the same time, that the development of African least developed countries is primarily the responsibility of their governments and peoples. In this regard, **WE COMMIT** ourselves individually and collectively to support the effort of the least developed countries in our continent through programmes for promoting regional economic cooperation. This, **WE BELIEVE**, is the only way forward for Africa as a whole to integrate into the global economy equitably.

5. In order to assist the least developed countries deal with the serious challenges they continue to face, **WE CALL ON** the international community to redouble its efforts in the critical areas of debt cancellation, resource flows, capacity-building and infrastructural development with concrete programmes to be worked out in close consultation and cooperation with our continental and regional organizations.

6. For the least developed countries to be a credible participant in the global economy and conscious of the unavoidable phenomenon of globalization, **WE CALL** on the Third United Nations Conference on the least developed countries to launch a programme for the accelerated transformation of the economies of these countries, with emphasis on expanding and diversifying the production and export base. While **WE COMMEND** the decision to improve market access for products from the least developed countries, we firmly believe that these opportunities can be

exploited advantageously only when the required production and export capacities have been established and strengthened in the least developed countries.

7. With regard to the debt problem of the least developed countries, **WE WELCOME** the announcement concerning the enhancing of the HIPC initiative and call on the international community to provide adequate resources for its effective operationalization. While underscoring the fact that external debt and the debt service payments represent an excruciating burden on our continent and stifle our effort at development, **WE CALL ON** the creditor countries and multilateral financial institutions to provide real debt relief, including debt cancellation in favour of all least developed countries, complemented by increased capital flows, particularly official development assistance, to meet the internationally agreed target, and foreign direct investment. **WE,** on our part, undertake to commit the funds released from such actions to the development of our societies with a view to eradicating poverty.

8. **WE PLEDGE** to lend our full support to the African least developed countries in preparing for the Third United Nations Conference and to ensure the effective participation of all our countries. **WE CALL ON** the Secretary-General of OAU, in consultation and cooperation with all the regional economic communities, UNCTAD and other related United Nations bodies, to assist the least developed countries in the preparation for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and to organize in that respect an African Ministerial Conference for the purpose of adopting an African common position.